177 Notice should also be taken of the transformation which has been
563 going on for half a century or so, in the fusion of Khas with Lus,
144 Laos and Thais. From these fusions have emerged the mixed-blood races which are known as Phou-Thèngs, Phou-Thîlongs, Soués, Phongs, Phou-Oks, Laos-Nîds, etc. [137] [Illustration] [138] [Blank page]

[139] Later on in 1898 and 1899 the 1894 experiment was tried once more, thanks to the intelligent initiative taken by the Superior Commandant in Upper Laos. His Majesty the king of Luang-Prabang proclaimed the emancipation of the Khas in his kingdom on both banks of the Mékong and even of those who, while natives of Luang-Prabang, are employed in Siam in the lumber camps of the upper Ménam valley.

In résumé, the Khas of French Laos are anything but a negligible quantity, but rather constitute a force and a reserve of energy from which we may draw great profit.

3. LANGUAGES

197 It is impossible here to examine in detail the many Kha idioms
194 and dialects, which only a long and attentive special study could succeed in coordinating, in grouping by similarities and in identifying with other languages, idioms and dialects which contributed to their formation.

The Kha dialects have harsh consonant sounds, among which the R and K are particularly noticeable, in contrast to what is the case in the other forms of the Thai language spoken in Laos where R, except in Siamese, is replaced by L or H.

Insofar as it is possible to judge, the primitive languages must have been corrupted when the land was invaded by foreigners. From that time on they dissolved, changed and became subdivided into idioms, and then into varied dialects. Besides the regional and racial
211 idioms and the various local dialects the Khas, who do not (except for the Khouènes) have any form of writing, use various means to translate their thoughts, and symbolic objects such as strips of wood in which they make notches in accordance with a conventional system.

This method may be compared to that of a great many illiterate persons, who sometimes succeed in keeping quite complicated accounts by this means.

If one were to entrust a letter to a Kha courier, for example, one [140] would give him the following symbolic objects grouped together:

This is doubtless due to the use of the brush, which does not make it possible to draw characters as fine and as purely rounded as with a dry point, a wooden stylus, a pen or a pencil, which are the only instruments used to write the other varieties of the Thai language. 212 197

Phouthai, like Laotian, is written in characters, but these differ in number and in form. The vowels are intercalated between the consonants, or are placed like accents above the line when the consonant stands alone, or may even always be placed above in the case of some vowels. This way of understanding the use of vowels can also be found in certain primitive languages.

In the regions where Phouthai writing is used the influence of the proximity of Annam and China has clearly manifested itself, and the alphabet has become syllabic. Scholars are able to learn by heart a certain number of syllables in which consonants and vowels are joined to form a single character, but those who have not learned Laotian cannot distinguish between the vowels and consonants nor use them separately. [101]

The Phouthais, who have the same basic spoken language as the Laotians but who have a different writing and religion, must either have separated from the primitive groupings before writing was created and have attained sufficient cohesion to create their own form of writing, or else must have learned it in a perfected state of development through some foreign current. It may also be said that when the Laotians adopted the Buddhist religion they lost their old Phouthai signs and took over those of the bonzes who had come to teach them the new faith. Then the brush was abandoned for the stylus and the point, which make it possible to write more rapidly and finely and to form a greater number of signs--these being necessary, moreover, to express and define the abstract ideas and subtle dogmas of the new religion. [177 795]

[142] The Phouthai alphabet includes only twenty-three characters, almost all of which are syllabic.

The Siamese language. Of all the forms of the Thai language, Siamese, as we have seen, is the most complete and the most highly developed. Thus it will perhaps be of interest to give some notion, as rapidly as possible, of this language. 212 194.

The alphabet is composed of forty-four letters which are divided into three classes, as follows:

11 letters on a rising tone, or high letters;
9 letters on a middle tone, or recto tono middle letters;

212
194

24 letters on a falling tone, or low letters.
These forty-four letters can be broken down into:
18 consonants;
5 vowels;
21 diphtongs.
The Siamese language has five tones:

1. Long recto tono and short recto tono;
2. Long circumflex tone, short circumflex tone and very short circumflex tone;
3. Long falling tone and short falling tone;
4. Long rising tone and short rising tone;
5. Long acute tone and short acute tone.

To represent these tones there are four accents which are placed above the syllables or vowels.

193

Nouns or substantives. The simple nouns are in large part monosyllabic. Only a few are polysyllabic. The compound nouns are formed of two words.

A large number of verbs and adjectives can be changed into substantives by means of a prefix. From the grammatical point of view, nouns do not have any gender or number. To distinguish between men and women a suffix is used which designates sex. In the case of animals, except for a few exceptions, the name is the same for the male and for the female. The male or female prefix is added to distinguish between them.

Numerals and numerical designations. Nouns do not have any number, and this is compensated for by adding expressions signifying [143] singular or plural, but which vary with each object. In French, for example, we would say "two kings, several leaders." In Siamese they say "kings, two persons; leaders, several persons."

These numerals are different, depending on whether it is a question of men, animals, plants or various objects.

For men, for example, there are three numerals. One applies to everybody, the second is used for God, the king, princes, priests and great men, and the third is used only for bonzes.

There are also thirty-five numerals which apply to animals, plants, fruit, material things, books, clothing, grain, flowers, stars, jewels, cloth, packages, string, thread, carts, weapons, etc.

Adjectives. Certain expressions may be construed either as adjectives or as substantives or verbs, depending on the construction of the sentence. A suffix after the noun forms a descriptive adjective,

193 while a prefix before the noun transforms it into a demonstrative adjective. The comparative is expressed by a suffix placed after the noun.

There are eleven expressions to indicate the superlative. They are used as prefixes or suffixes in accordance with fixed rules.

Personal pronouns. There are eleven pronouns for the first person which vary in accordance with the status of the speaker and the person being spoken to.

There are ten for the second person and eight for the third.

Possessive pronouns. There is no such pronoun in Siamese. It is replaced by the genitive of the person or animal which possesses.

Relative pronouns. They are in the number of three, and stand before the object which they modify.

Interrogative pronouns. They are five in number. When repeated they become relative or indefinite and signify, for example, whoever instead of who, whatever instead of what, etc.

Verbs. Verbs do not have conjugations, moods, tenses or persons. Like nouns, they are always invariable. Some semblance of conjugation may nevertheless be achieved by means of particles or auxiliary words. These words, in the number of eleven, change the [144] meaning of sentences by expressing an action or an idea, according as they stand before the verb or after.

Principal adverbs. There are seventy-eight principal adverbs. Moreover, certain nouns or adjectives take an adverbial form by means of seven particles which are placed after them.

Prepositions and conjunctions. There are twenty-eight main prepositions and twenty-five conjunctions (1).

[113]

(1) Pallegoix, Dictionnaire siamois-français-anglais, 1896.

212 The Lao or Laotian language. The Lao alphabet is composed of
• 194 twenty-eight letters divided into fourteen simple or compound consonants and fourteen vowels or diphthongs. They are divided into three classes, as follows:

1. Six letters on a rising or aspirated tone;
2. Eight letters on a middle or recto tone;
3. Fourteen letters on a falling or low tone.

To obtain the grave, long grave, short, open and close tones, signs and accents are used. These may be placed above or below the consonant, or may be formed by joining certain vowels and

consonants. Vowels or diphthongs are also sometimes written before the consonant. 2/2 194

This system of accentuation is, however, not at all fixed, because of the lack of tonic accents. This is what explains the great number of synonyms, as far as spelling goes--synonyms which differ only in pronunciation. It is therefore essential to know the meaning of the sentence in order to give it the necessary accentuation and the proper intonation.

It is easy to write, but reading it is fraught with difficulty. To be sure, the orthography is not very complicated, and after a certain time one can manage to write it fairly correctly.

The same is not true of Siamese, and the fixed rules of tonality which it has make it possible, when one has a firm grasp of them, to read all texts without understanding anything.

The Youn language. The Youn language which is in current usage in all of western Laos, [145] that is to say in the basin of the upper Ménam and in part of the Laotian Shan States, is Lao which has been modified graphically by the introduction of certain forms borrowed from the alphabetic signs of the Burmese language. There is no doubt but that it is a compound of the Thai language and that which was brought to Laos by the Pégouans and the Burmese and which underwent profound modifications on contact with Buddhism. [177]

What seems to lend credence to this hypothesis is that the Youn alphabet is used almost exclusively in all parts of Laos for the sacred books and manuscripts of the pagodas. It is a kind of transition between Pali, which is too little known and little suited to expressing the sounds of the Thai language, and this latter language itself which is regarded as too vulgar. A somewhat modified Youn alphabet was then created, and was reserved for religious writings, both texts and copies. A knowledge of this special alphabet is, in Laos, the mark of a superior degree of education. 2/2. 176

The Lu language. Like the preceding, the Lu language is complex and formed of the same elements. That is to say, it is due to the introduction of a Burmese graphic element into the already existing Thai element. In this way it has answered to new needs which resulted from the milieu and from social relations. 2/2 177

Thus the Lu language includes a certain number of Chinese, Kha and Burmese words which have been added to the original Thai mass.

The Lu alphabet includes twenty-six letters, twelve vowels and fourteen consonants.

[76] LAOTIAN WRITING AND LANGUAGE

212 Laotian writing has an alphabet. It is written from left to right. The Laotian characters derive from the Thai writing created by King Rama Kamheng of Sukhodya in A. D. 1283. But this Thai writing is merely a substitute for the cursive form of the writing of inscriptions in ancient Khmer of Cambodia. This explains the striking similarities of Laotian and Khmer letters.

The tham characters are used especially in religious texts, but also sometimes in novels.

Two other writings close to the Laotian alphabet are the lu, whose use is localized in the extreme north, and the yuon, used at Xieng Mai and in the bordering provinces.

213 The Laotian manuscripts written on four lines are engraved with a pointed instrument on palm leaves of varying length pierced with two holes, at one third and at two thirds of their length. The cord which is to hold them together must only be put through the hole on the left side. A bundle of about twenty leaves forms a phuk (pronounced p'ouk). These phuk are grouped in bundles (mat) which are wrapped up in a piece of cloth or else they are put in a pile held at the top and bottom by two wooden boards, and pierced from right to left with a double series of holes through which a thin cord is passed. The two extremities are tied in a knot used to carry this mass.

[77] The Laotian Language

● 194 It is a tonal language. It possesses three series of letters, medium, high and low.

193 Morphology. The purely Laotian words rarely have more than two syllables. There is no article. The words are invariable. There is no gender, nor number, only generic terms used to define men, animals, vegetables, etc. The generic categories are numerous. There is one used for leaves and all that is flat, another for round and elongated objects, such as trees and columns, etc., in all there are about twenty.

Like the other words, the verb is invariable. Verbal time is unknown, but there are auxiliaries indicating a completed action. Personal pronouns differ according to whether the person addressed is an inferior, an equal or a superior. [554]

Syntax. Laotian construction is direct: subject, verb, object. The determinant follows the determined. A question is made without